

**Maine 2019 Political Update: Electing to Change, and Changing Elections**

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Since the spring of 2018, Maine has seen significant political change. Most, but not all, of this change has come a result of the 2018 elections. This article, a companion piece to my participation as the Maine representative on the annual New England Politics Roundtable at NEPSA, will paint a picture of these changes. Much of the theme of the article is how elections work in Maine, and how the results of elections lead to changes in policy—changes that often saw the Dirigo State as the first in the nation to enact them.

## **Elections**

### **Ranked Choice Voting**

Maine had already received extensive attention for its 2016 initiative victory calling on Maine to use Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in its elections for state and congressional offices (e.g. Richie 2015; Waxman 2016; Santucci 2018a). The city of Portland has already been using RCV in its mayoral elections since 2011 (Burnett and Kogan 2015; Kimball and Anthony 2016, 7). Following an advisory ruling by the Maine Supreme Judicial Court, Governor Paul LePage signed legislation that would, in effect, repeal ranked choice voting for state and congressional offices. Backers of RCV then launched a People’s Veto campaign. In Maine, new legislation can be blocked from taking effect by a People’s Veto vote after being placed on the ballot by petition. RCV backers got enough signatures to qualify the People’s Veto vote for the June 2018 ballot, when busy nomination primaries were taking place, most notably for Governor and, for Democrats, Second District Congressman.

Maine received extensive national and regional attention both for its 2018 people’s veto vote to retain RCV and for its use in the November election (for example, “Ranked-Choice” 2018; Daley 2018; Lessig 2018; Fried and Glover 2018; Rakich 2018; Reichard 2018; Santucci 2018a; Santucci 2018b; Scanlon 2018; Withers 2018). I will discuss how RCV had a dramatic

impact on the Second District congressional race later in this article.

### **June 2018 Primaries**

Both major parties had contested races in their primary for governor, and the Democrats had a spirited three-way race for the 2<sup>nd</sup> District congressional nomination. The four-way Republican race turned out to be surprisingly one-sided, with 2010 Independent gubernatorial candidate and Maine businessman Shawn Moody easily defeating three opponents—former Maine DHHS Secretary Mary Mayhew, House Minority Leader Ken Fredette, and Senate Majority Leader Garrett Mason—with over 50% of the vote. While Paul LePage did not officially endorse him, Moody—like LePage, a successful businessman—received help from many in LePage’s inner circle, including his daughter and wife. All of the candidates essentially promised to continue LePage’s policies without following LePage’s brash and confrontational style.

The Democratic gubernatorial primary had a good deal more ideological range than the Republican one. Unlike the 2014 gubernatorial nomination race in which Democrats united behind Congressman Mike Michaud, the 2018 race was a wide open affair. So many candidates were considering running—at one point there were thirteen candidates—that there was fear that with so many seeking to run with clean election money, the state clean elections fund would run out of money. However, many of these candidates failed to raise the necessary contributions to run clean and dropped out at the deadline. This left seven candidates, including: Attorney General Janet Mills; attorney, clean energy entrepreneur and veteran Adam Cote; former State Representative Diane Russell; women’s rights activist Betsy Sweet; Maine House Speaker Mark Eves; State Senator and former Cumberland County Sheriff Mark Dion, and former Biddeford Mayor Donna Dion. Mills and Cote were considered to be the relatively moderate candidates in

the race, and the contest largely came down to them, Eves and Sweet.

While Republican gubernatorial candidates ignored the presence of ranked choice voting in their primary (other than to speak out against it and, occasionally, to threaten not to honor the results if it led to their defeat), Eves and Sweet used ranked choice voting in an unprecedented way. Not only did they campaign together at various events, but they also ran television commercials in which they appeared together, urging voters to rank one of them first and the other second (Schallhorn 2018).

Toward the end, the race came down to Cote and Mills. A large, late negative independent expenditure ad buy by Emily's List critical of Cote aroused controversy and was the most discussed subject down the stretch (Miller 2018a). Mills led in all four rounds of RCV balloting, and finally came out on top of Cote in Round 4 (Miller 2018b).

### **November 2018 General Election: The Easy Wins**

Even though Ranked Choice Voting was available in two of Maine's congressional races, these proved to be uneventful: Maine's U.S. Senate seat, and Maine's First Congressional District. As expected, incumbent Independent Senator Angus King cruised to a comfortable victory over the Republican candidate, libertarian-style State Senator Eric Brakey, and the Democrat, software entrepreneur Zak Ringelstein. Notably, these were two of the youngest party nominees in the nation: Ringelstein was 32 and Brakey 30 on Election Day. Ringelstein positioned himself well to King's left and was noted nationally as the only Senate candidate in the country with an endorsement from the Democratic Socialists of America (Sharon 2018). But most Democrats stuck with King, who caucuses with the Democrats in the United States Senate, and King finished with well above the 50% that would have needed to trigger ranked choice ballots (Russell 2018).

The First District's Democratic incumbent, Chellie Pingree, likewise triumphed in a three-way race that did not require rounds of ranked choice votes. Some had thought Pingree might be threatened by the presence of ranked choice voting in her race. Former Democratic state legislator Marty Grohman ran as an Independent against Pingree, and attracted some support from elected moderate Republicans (such as State Rep. Matt Pouliot, R-Augusta, and State Senator Tom Saviello, R-Franklin and Kennebec Counties) who gave him a better chance of winning than Republican Mark Holbrook, who Pingree beat in 2016 (Lawlor 2018). The thought was that if Pingree could be held under 50% of the vote, and if Grohman ran ahead of Holbrook, that Grohman would win based on Holbrook supporters' second choice votes. After all, this type of nonpartisan centrist is the sort of candidate some RCV voters hoped would be helped by the new system (Sharp 2018). However, Grohman's campaign never caught fire, and he finished a distant third in the race. Like King, Pingree gained a majority of votes, rendering ranked choice votes moot in her case.

### **Maine General Election 2018: The Less Easy Win**

Maine was slated to choose a new governor in 2018, as incumbent Republican Paul LePage was terming out after two terms. And once again, Maine's race would include a centrist Independent joining the Democratic and Republican candidates: State Treasurer Terry Hayes. Like Marty Grohman, Hayes was a former Democratic legislator who left the party to become an Independent.

Unlike some previous centrist Independents running for governor who all reached over 20%—Angus King in his winning races in 1994 and 1998, Barbara Merrill in 2006, and Eliot Cutler in 2010—Hayes was never able to get the traction she might have gotten had Maine's major parties nominated candidates ideologically farther from the center. The campaign was also

much more low-key and civil than the past two elections had seen. In the end, Mills won with 54%—enough to avoid rounds of second choice voting—and she became the first woman governor in Maine history.

### **Maine General Election 2018: The Really, Really Hard Win**

Here is the race where Ranked Choice Voting made its effect felt the most: the 2nd District congressional race. Once again, this race was a focus of national attention, and was one of the most expensive races in the country. It also set a record for the most spending for any U. S. House race in Maine history (Collins 2018). Incumbent Republican Bruce Poliquin and Democratic challenger Jared Golden were joined by two little-known Independents who were relatively unideological, but generally considered to the left of Golden.

By Maine standards, the race was bruisingly negative, in large part due to ads originating outside of Maine. Many of these were paid for by congressional party campaign organizations. Much of the race was a back and forth about Golden. Poliquin tried to depict him as dangerously left wing and out of step with Second District values, much as he had done successfully to Emily Cain in their 2014 and 2016 matchups. Golden highlighted his experience as a soldier in Afghanistan and his comfort and skill at using a rifle for target practice, giving him an image more conservative than Cain had. Also unlike Cain, Golden grew up in Maine, taking away another argument Poliquin had used in his past races. Polling consistently showed that the race would be very close, and it became apparent that with Ranked Choice voting being used in this race, the outcome might take some time to determine.

The initial count showed Bruce Poliquin with a small but clear plurality of first place votes, with Golden behind by just over 2000 votes, and Independents Tiffany Bond and Will Hoar well behind with a combined share of about 8% of the vote. However, since most of Bond

and Hoar's voters ranked Golden ahead of Poliquin, Golden wound up winning after ranked choice voting was applied (Miller and Thistle 2018). Poliquin pursued a multipronged legal strategy but ultimately conceded defeat in the election around Christmas (Mistler 2018c). He remains a bitter opponent of RCV, calling it "a scam" in a speech before the 2019 New England Political Science Association convention in Portland, Maine.

### **Maine Government after the 2018 General Election**

Governor Mills is working with a legislature in which both houses are controlled by her Democratic Party. Mills pledged to avoid raising taxes in her 2018 campaign, but many legislative Democrats and others on her left, who are not as fiscally conservative, unsuccessfully pressured her to bring in more state tax revenue, particularly by repealing Governor LePage's income tax cuts for high income earners. Key points of emphasis for many legislative Democrats were restoration of local government aid and moving the state to fund 55% of the cost of public education. The latter was passed in a state initiative in the 2000s, but has never been put into place. (See, for example, Kesich 2019; Flisiuk 2019; and Neumann 2019). On the other side, former Governor Paul LePage issued a press release criticizing the Mills budget as too free-spending: "The difference between Janet Mills's budget and a drunken sailor is that a drunken sailor spends his own money...It is outrageous. She's spending the projections before the money is even in the bank. It is irresponsible" (Flisiuk 2019). While the state's share of K-12 costs was increased in the budget, it did so at a rate well short of 55%. Mills has had less conflict on many other items. Legislative Democrats have been happy to go along with Mills on numerous issues.

One such area concerned Maine's Native Americans. Issues concerning Maine's Indian tribes have been on the agenda since Mills' election. Mills was criticized during the campaign for her stances as Attorney General concerning Maine tribes, both within her party and by tribal

leaders (see, for example, Mistler 2018a), but she has worked hard to reach agreement with tribes on a variety of issues. Tribes have also called for change in high schools that use Indian nicknames—a policy change they have sought for many years (see, for example, Rosenstein 1997 and Pewewardy 2004). Skowhegan High School, whose nickname has been the Indians for decades, was the final holdout in Maine refusing to change its nickname until their school board did so recently. Shortly thereafter, Governor Mills signed legislation that bars public schools in the state from using “a name, symbol or image that depicts or refers to a Native American tribe, individual custom or tradition and that is used as a mascot, nickname, logo, letterhead or team name of the school” (Mandell 2019). Maine is now the first state in the nation where no high schools have Indian nicknames (Pell 2019). Also, Mills’ signature of a bill to rename Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples’ Day joined Maine with five other states which now have a day to honor Native Americans instead of Christopher Columbus (Ehrlich 2019).

## **Environmental Issues**

### **Energy**

During Paul LePage’s time as governor, LePage was often a blunt critic of plans to expand wind and solar energy in Maine, because he believed that they would increase electric costs, thereby harming Maine’s economic competitiveness (Kelly 2018) . With Janet Mills in the Blaine House, the tide has turned in favor of solar and wind power. Mills repealed the moratorium on new wind power projects put in place by LePage in 2018, signed a wind demonstration project off of Monhegan Island into law, raised renewable energy portfolio goals, and approved legislation to develop solar power further (Mitchell 2019; O’Brien 2019).

### **Single-Use Styrofoam Ban**

Renewable energy sources are an alternative to fossil fuels; another fossil fuel issue is

their use in making Styrofoam food containers and in plastic bags. Styrofoam has come to be a broadly used catchall term for expanded polystyrene foam products, first developed for commercial use in the 1940s. It has been popular in a wide variety of applications because it is relatively cheap, durable, chemically stable, and lightweight, and can be made into many types of forms. Over time, however, a number of possible environmental downsides were discovered about Styrofoam, including possible health risks to the workers who make it and consumers who use it, ocean pollution, and its lack of biodegradability; in addition, its creation from nonrenewable sources has come to be criticized as well (Cansier 2018; Friend 2005; Thaysen et al. 2018). Recycling issues also played a role in the ban. Styrofoam food containers are relatively difficult to recycle, are rarely recycled, and no community in Maine offers recycling of them (Alsup 2019).

Because of these problems, cities and counties around the country have been banning Styrofoam food containers since the late 1980s. Freeport, Maine was one of the nation's earliest Styrofoam ordinance adopters (Reck 1990). By 2019, the Natural Resources Council of Maine, which supported the proposal, reported that over 150 local, county or regional governments had such bans on Styrofoam food containers, and 14 of them were in Maine (Teboe 2019). Governor Mills signed the bill into law, which takes effect January 1, 2021—allowing restaurants, coffee shops and others time to use up their stock of Styrofoam foodservice products like cups and plates (Parker 2019). Critics, however, fear this law will add cost to businesses using foodservice products (Crepeau 2019). While several other states are considering Styrofoam food packaging bans in 2019, Maine's enactment of this law makes it the first state in the nation to do so (Dunlevy 2019).

### **Single-Use Plastic Bag Ban**

Like Styrofoam, single use plastic bags have been a thorny issue for recycling. When placed with consumer recycling, they can cause serious problems clogging sorting machines at recyclers such as Ecomaine (Edwards 2019). Bans, restrictions and fees for single-use plastic bags at stores have been enacted in over 270 municipalities in the United States by 2017 (Wagner 2017). Twenty-four of these were in Maine, and there was variation in how they worked. Seeking more uniformity around the state for how plastic bag restrictions would affect them, the Retail Association of Maine and Maine Grocers and Food Producers Association joined with environmental groups to create a law that would supersede local ordinances and establish a new statewide policy. Governor Mills' signature made Maine the fourth state in the nation to pass such restrictions on single use plastic bags; Vermont followed suit shortly afterwards (Hoey 2019).

### **Powerline Project**

Governor Mills enjoyed extensive praise and support from environmental groups for her approval of legislation restricting plastic bags and Styrofoam food ware products. But these groups were more divided over her support for building a new power line through western Maine. Quebec has long sought ways to send its hydroelectric power to southern New England. But because it lacks access to power lines to do so, it does not maximize production from its hydroelectric dams. Massachusetts has sought to help fulfill its renewable energy portfolio promises by buying this power from Quebec. Getting the power line built, however, has proven difficult. Vermont and New Hampshire, in turn, each refused to permit the new power line to be built through their state. This led to a partnership between HydroQuebec and Central Maine Power to build the power line through Maine, where it would connect to existing power lines.

The proposed project is called New England Clean Energy Connect (NECEC).

After receiving initial resistance, HydroQuebec sweetened the deal. The Conservation Law Foundation, which had opposed the earlier New Hampshire proposal, participated in helping craft the new offer and backed this phase (Serebrin 2019). As discussed in Jacob Serebrin's *Montreal Gazette* article, the offer "includes \$10 million to encourage the use of electric vehicles in Maine, \$10 million to help Maine residents switch their heating systems from oil to electricity, US\$10 million for high-speed internet connections and US\$3.5 million a year, over 40 years, to lower electricity rates in the state," giving Maine a grand total of \$170 million (Serebrin 2019).

Many, however, were not convinced the program was beneficial to Maine, and have raised vocal and strenuous opposition. Mainers have long been sensitive to actions they perceive as changing Maine's nature for the benefit of people from outside of Maine—such as Ibedrola, the Spanish owners of Central Maine Power. Both the Boston-based Appalachian Mountain Club and the Natural Resources Council of Maine are opposed to the project (Arnold 2018; Theriault 2019). That the project directly supplied Massachusetts and would not feed into Maine's electrical grid was a common theme of opponents,<sup>1</sup> and television ads further played the "from away" card by repeatedly claiming that the corridor "would be as wide as the New Jersey Turnpike" (Chrisos 2019). As one op-ed piece put it, "Massachusetts, not us, is the NIMBY here. They don't want it in their backyard, and they apparently think we're a cheap date" (Howard 2019). The project also comes at a bad time in terms of public relations for CMP, which had a disastrous rollout of a new billing method that angered many customers over the past two years, and which is also now seeking a rate increase (Turler 2019).

There has even been talk in the Legislature of creating a public power company to

replace CMP and Emera, an electric company serving eastern Maine (Hamilton 2019, Bodnar 2019). In a scathing editorial, the *Portland Press Herald*, which has generally supported the NECEC project, said,

As climate change drives the world to modernize the way we produce and use power, we are going to see more infrastructure projects like the one proposed by CMP, and some of them will be disruptive and controversial. With what lies ahead, it's a good time for Mainers to ask whether an investor-owned utility like CMP is the best entity to lead those changes. So far, CMP's response to its self-inflicted billing problems suggests that the answer may be 'no' ("Our View" 2019).

The project is still under discussion (Tapley 2019a, 2019b).

## **Medical Issues**

### **MaineCare (Medicaid)**

Maine voters passed an initiative in 2017 to expand Medicaid, but former Governor Paul LePage refused to allow it to go forward, in part because he did not believe there was an adequate funding formula in place to pay for it (Mistler 2018b). On her first day in office, Governor Mills moved to put Medicaid expansion into place. The expansion was approved by the national government in April (Lawlor 2019). However, there have significantly fewer new enrollments as of June than were predicted (Villeneuve 2019b). Governor Mills also signed several bills into law seeking to expand access to prescription drugs, including potentially making the state a wholesaler for drugs from Canada (Miller 2019b). She also signed a paid leave bill into law that made "Maine the first state to require that private employers provide earned paid leave—not just sick leave—to employees" (Silver 2019).

### **“Death with Dignity”**

In a reversal from an initiative vote in 2000 which rejected legalizing “assisted suicide,” Governor Mills also signed a “death with dignity” bill, making Maine the 8<sup>th</sup> state to permit assisted suicide under limited circumstances. This was not an issue Mills had campaigned on, and many were uncertain what she would do once the bill reached her. Mills herself seemed torn over the issue, and said at the bill signing that this was her most difficult decision as governor so far (Mistler 2019b). Maine voters had narrowly rejected an initiative in 2000 similar to the law enacted in 2019; three other states also voted against similar initiatives in the 1990s, while Oregon passed its initiative in 1997 (Joslyn and Haider-Markel 2006, 88, 90-91 and 99)

### **Abortion**

There was less surprise that Governor Mills sought an abortion insurance coverage mandate. This not only included private insurers, but the state’s Medicaid plan as well (Huffman 2019). At a time when other states, such as Missouri and Alabama, were tightening access to abortion, Mills led action to expand abortion access in Maine. Maine was not alone in increasing action to abortion or in removing obstacles to getting one. A range of pro-abortion rights proposals passed in 2019 in New York State, New York City, Rhode Island, Vermont and Nevada (North 2019). Mills also signed legislation that now allows nurse practitioners and physician assistants to perform abortions, joining eight other states with similar laws. Mills hopes this will expand abortion access, particularly in rural areas that may be distant from the three existing clinics performing abortions in Augusta, Bangor and Portland (Miller 2019a; Meads 2019).

### **Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

There was conflict over how Maine should handle matters concerning refugees and

asylum seekers during Paul LePage's time as governor. LePage cut state funding for cities (most prominently Portland) that provided assistance to undocumented immigrants. Then Attorney General Janet Mills argued that it was not legal for cities and towns to discriminate in giving emergency aid based on immigration status (Sherwood 2014). In late 2018 and 2019, Maine saw a major surge in immigration: legally present refugees and asylum seekers coming to the state—again, chiefly to Portland. The size and suddenness of the surge, chiefly driven by people fleeing turmoil and violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola, caught Maine officials by surprise. In some cases, Texas shelters overwhelmed by refugees and asylum seekers bought bus tickets for them to go to Portland (Billings 2019). And since asylum seekers are barred from working while their applications are being processed, Maine cities such as Portland where they came were under pressure to provide extensive and expensive services. Portland's Mayor, Ethan Strimling, has been consistent in offering a welcome to refugees and asylum seekers, even as in the short run they cause strain on the city's budget and facilities. Maine has had well-publicized seasonal worker shortages in recent years, and along with research commissioned in part by the Greater Portland Chamber of Commerce suggesting that immigrants have had a strong economic benefit overall on the Portland area, many in Portland feel the influx will be advantageous to Maine in the long run (Billings and Hoey 2018; Billings 2019; Gratz 2019). Governor Mills supports the arrival of the refugees and asylum seekers, as well as Portland's efforts to help them (Feinberg 2019).

## **Future Elections**

### **Maine and Presidential Delegate Voting**

Since the presidential nominating reforms of the 1970s went into effect, Maine has switched back and forth between using primaries and caucuses. For 1996, Maine and the rest of

New England (except for New Hampshire) established a “Yankee Primary,” which they hoped would attract attention to their region in much the same way “Super Tuesday,” which began in 1988, had for the South. In both cases, the state in the particular region held their primaries on the same day throughout their region, in part to entice candidates to campaign region-wide and in part to favor candidates with values supported in New England (McDowell 1997, 181-84; “Republicans Cast Votes” 2016). Maine tried a presidential primary in both 1996 and 2000, but did not get the attention nor the impact on the race primary advocates had hoped for (Day 1996, Mills 2016). In part to save the state money, Maine returned to caucuses for 2004, and it has held them for picking presidential delegates up until now.

Rumblings to return to a primary began in 2012, when Republicans experienced substantial internal conflict about how the caucuses were run, particularly between supporters of Mitt Romney and of Ron Paul. Some Republicans after these difficulties called for a presidential primary to return (Richardson 2012). But the current move toward presidential primaries has chiefly come from Democrats. Turnout for the 2016 Democratic caucuses was much higher than the Democratic Party had anticipated, and the caucus sites were often crowded or had very long lines to get in—as long as three hours in Portland (Mills 2016).

Not only did the 2016 experience lead to desire for change from inside Maine, but the national Democratic Party weighed in as well in 2018, passing reforms urging (but not requiring) states to use presidential primaries rather than caucuses. Several states that have held caucuses in the past will use primaries for presidential selection in 2020. Maine had voted to return to a primary even before the 2016 election, but failed to do so when funding for the change did not materialize (Villeneuve 2019a, Democratic National Committee 2018).

Driven heavily by Democratic support, the Maine Legislature passed a bill, signed into

law by Governor Mills, permitting (but not requiring) parties to hold a presidential primary selection process (Mistler 2019a, Winger 2019). The Maine Democratic Party eagerly moved to install a presidential primary, to be held on Super Tuesday 2020 (Maine Democratic Party 2019). As of mid-July 2019, Maine Republicans have not yet moved toward a presidential primary, and as of mid-July 2019, are planning on a presidential caucus for 2020 (Roderick 2019).

### **Congress**

Besides control of the Legislature—since Maine has two-year terms for both its Senate and House, the entire Legislature will be up for election—2020 will bring interesting elections for Congress. It may also bring some controversial initiatives on social issues.

Senator Susan Collins will be up for re-election in 2020. As of early summer 2019, she has not yet made an announcement that she will run again. While she is likely to do so, there is always the possibility that she may surprise people by stepping away, as Olympia Snowe did in 2012. Her path to re-election appears to be somewhat more difficult in 2020 than it was in 2014. As recently as 2016, a quarterly national survey conducted by Morning Consult ranked Collins as the second most popular U.S. senator among one's own constituents in the nation (Charns 2017). But by the first quarter of 2019, she had dropped to 14<sup>th</sup> place, and had seen her net approval fall from +40 to +13 (Morning Consult 2019).

While Collins' approval rating had declined before her vote to confirm Brett Kavanaugh to the United States Supreme Court, the period since has seen highly polarized national attention for her. The pro-choice group Be A Hero called upon Collins to vote against Kavanaugh and promised to raise money through crowdfunding for her future opponent if she voted for him. As of early summer 2019, Be A Hero had raised over \$4 million for her future Democratic opponent (Be A Hero 2019). That is already nearly double what Collins' 2014 Democratic opponent,

Shenna Bellows, was able to raise in her entire campaign, in which Collins received 68% of the vote (Center for Responsive Politics 2018). However, Collins has not only received assurances from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell that she will be “well-funded” in her re-election bid, she has been highly successful raising money since her Kavanaugh vote. In raising \$2 million in the second quarter of 2018, Collins set a personal record for campaign contributions and she has already raised more money than she did in her successful 2014 race (Klar 2019).

Table 1 shows the amounts spent per candidate in recent Maine Senate elections.

**Table 1** Money Raised by U.S. Senate Candidates in Maine, 2000-2018

<b>Year</b>	<b>Democratic</b>	<b>Republican</b>	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2018</b>	\$382,000 (Ringelstein)	\$951,000 (Brakey)	\$5,340,000 (King <sup>1</sup> )	\$6,673,000
<b>2016</b>	\$2,54,000 (Bellows)	\$6.228,000 (Collins <sup>1</sup> )		\$8,581,000
<b>2012</b>	\$184,000 (Dill)	\$1,240,000 (Summers)	\$2,927,000 (King <sup>1</sup> ) <sup>2</sup>	\$4,413,000
<b>2008</b>	\$5,999,000 (Allen)	\$8,040,000 (Collins <sup>1</sup> )	\$43,000 (Hoffman)	\$14.081,000
<b>2006</b>	\$127,000 (Hay Bright)	\$3,788,000 (Snowe <sup>1</sup> )	\$1,900 (Slavick)	\$3,917,000
<b>2002</b>	\$3,871,000 (Pingree)	\$4,266,000 (Collins <sup>1</sup> )		\$7,952,000
<b>2000</b>	\$740,000 (Lawrence)	\$2,513,000 (Snowe <sup>1</sup> )		\$3,069,000

<sup>1</sup>Incumbent.

<sup>2</sup>A second Independent, Steve Woods, raised \$61,000.

Source: Center for Responsive Politics 2018, (Rounded to nearest thousand; totals may be affected by rounding)

As of mid-July, Collins has attracted four Democratic opponents—Maine House Speaker Sara Gideon, 2018 gubernatorial candidate Betsy Sweet, attorney Bre Kidman and retired Air Force Major General Jonathan Treacy—as well as Independent transgender rights activist

Danielle VanHelsing. For the first time since being elected to the Senate, she has a Republican primary challenger, too—construction business owner and populist-conservative blogger David Levasseur, a member of the Maine Republican Party’s State Central Committee. Collins’ Democratic challengers are coming at her from the left, and are particularly critical of her vote to confirm Brett Kavanaugh. Levasseur, by contrast, has come after Collins from her right, offering populist themes, and noting his support for a tough line on immigration and the Second Amendment (Thistle 2019, Miller 2019b, Collins 2019a, Collins 2019c).

Thus far, the 2020 House races have been quieter, though both Chellie Pingree and Jared Golden are likely to seek re-election. 2018 Republican U.S. Senate nominee Eric Brakey has formed an exploratory committee investigating a possible run for the Second District seat against Golden (Collins 2019b).

Just as there has been pushback on the left for Collins’ vote to confirm Brett Kavanaugh, there has also been pushback, chiefly from conservatives, against some of the new laws enacted under Governor Mills. By early July, there have been applications for people’s veto petition authorization for 12 different issues. This process would require each proposed people’s veto vote petition to gather 63,067 signatures to get on the November 2019 ballot.<sup>2</sup> A people’s veto in Maine, should it qualify for the ballot, blocks implementation of a new law until an initiative vote can be held statewide. Among the new laws these petitions seek to block and then overturn concern assisted suicide, the new ban on “conversion therapy” for minors, vaccination exemptions and abortion (Thistle 2019b). It has been an interesting year in Maine politics, and these proposed people’s vetoes may keep national attention on the Dirigo State.

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<sup>1</sup> One particularly pithy example came as an online comment on a news article (Tapley 2019a) on the subject: “Maine: Massachusetts’s [sic] extension cord to Canada. Janet Mills should make that our new license plate logo. A frayed electric cord. Or a forest fire.”

<sup>2</sup> This number is derived from the requirement of signatures equal to 10% of the number of voters in the most recent election for Maine governor (Thistle 2019b).